IN THE CLAIMS

Please cancel claims 1, 8, 15 and 18-19 without prejudice or disclaimer.

Please amend claims 2, 9 and 16 as indicated below.

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (cancelled)

Claim 2 (currently amended) ~~The method as recited in claim 1 further comprising the steps of:~~ A method for reducing the number of messages to be processed by a control processor in a load balancer comprising the steps of:

receiving a request to establish a TCP connection from a client by a network processor in said load balancer;

establishing said TCP connection with said client via handshake messages between said network processor and said client;

receiving a request message from said client;

bundling said request message and information from said handshake messages involved in establishing said TCP connection by said network processor;

transmitting said bundled message to said control processor by said network; and

identifying a server in a server farm to service said client's request message by said control processor;

bundling said client's request message and a control message by said control processor; and

transmitting said bundled message comprising said client's request message and said control message to said network processor.

Claim 3 (original) The method as recited in claim 2, wherein said server in said server farm is identified using information extracted from said client's request message.

Claim 4 (original) The method as recited in claim 2, wherein said control message comprises information used to enable said network processor to create entries in a forwarding table to ensure packets from said client are transmitted to said server and to ensure packets from said server are transmitted to said client.

Claim 5 (original) The method as recited in claim 2, wherein said control message comprises information to establish a TCP connection between said load balancer and said server.

Claim 6 (original) The method as recited in claim 2 further comprising the steps of:

receiving a request to terminate said TCP connection from said server by said network processor;

facilitating said termination of said connection between said server and said client;

bundling information regarding a series of closed connections by said network processor; and

transmitting said bundled message regarding said series of closed connections to said control processor by said network processor.

Claim 7 (original) The method as recited in claim 6 further comprising the step of:

extracting information from said bundled message regarding said series of closed connections by said control processor.

Claim 8 (cancelled)

Claim 9 (currently amended) ~~The computer program product as recited in claim 8 further comprising the programming steps of:~~ A computer program product embodied in a machine readable medium for reducing the number of messages to be processed by a control processor in a load balancer comprising the programming steps of:

receiving a request to establish a TCP connection from a client by a network processor in said load balancer;

establishing said TCP connection with said client via handshake messages between said network processor and said client;

receiving a request message from said client;

bundling said request message and information from said handshake messages involved in establishing said TCP connection by said network processor;

transmitting said bundled message to said control processor by said network processor; and

identifying a server in a server farm to service said client's request message by said control processor;

bundling said client's request message and a control message by said control processor; and

transmitting said bundled message comprising said client's request message and said control message to said network processor.

Claim 10 (original) The computer program product as recited in claim 9, wherein said server in said server farm is identified using information extracted from said client's request message.

Claim 11 (original) The computer program product as recited in claim 9, wherein said control message comprises information used to enable said network processor to create entries in a forwarding table to ensure packets from said client are transmitted to said server and to ensure packets from said server are transmitted to said client.

Claim 12 (original) The computer program product as recited in claim 9, wherein said control message comprises information to establish a TCP connection between said load balancer and said server.

Claim 13 (original) The computer program product as recited in claim 9 further comprising the programming steps of:

receiving a request to terminate said TCP connection from said server by said network processor;

facilitating said termination of said connection between said server and said client;

bundling information regarding a series of closed connections by said network processor; and

transmitting said bundled message regarding said series of closed connections to said control processor by said network processor.

Claim 14 (original) The computer program product as recited in claim 13 further comprising the programming step of:

extracting information from said bundled message regarding said series of closed connections by said control processor.

Claim 15 (cancelled) A load balancer, comprising:

a network processor, wherein said network processor is configured to process fast path packets;

a control processor coupled to said network processor, wherein said control processor is configured to process slow path packets; and

a memory unit coupled to said control processor and said network processor, wherein said memory unit is operable for storing a computer program for reducing the number of messages to be processed by said control processor;

wherein said network processor, responsive to said computer program, comprises:

circuitry operable for receiving a request to establish a TCP connection from a client;

circuitry operable for establishing said TCP connection with said client via handshake messages between said network processor and said client;

circuitry operable for receiving a request message from said client;

circuitry operable for bundling said request message and information from said handshake messages involved in establishing said TCP connection; and

circuitry operable for transmitting said bundled message to said control processor.

Claim 16 (currently amended) ~~The system as recited in claim 15, wherein said control processor, responsive to said computer program, comprises:~~ A load balancer, comprising:

a network processor, wherein said network processor is configured to process fast path packets;

a control processor coupled to said network processor, wherein said control processor is configured to process slow path packets; and

a memory unit coupled to said control processor and said network processor, wherein said memory unit is operable for storing a computer program for reducing the number of messages to be processed by said control processor;

wherein said network processor, responsive to said computer program, comprises:

circuitry operable for receiving a request to establish a TCP connection from a client;

circuitry operable for establishing said TCP connection with said client via handshake messages between said network processor and said client;

circuitry operable for receiving a request message from said client;

circuitry operable for bundling said request message and information from said handshake messages involved in establishing said TCP connection;

circuitry operable for transmitting said bundled message to said control processor; and

circuitry operable for identifying a server in a server farm to service said client's request message;

circuitry operable for bundling said client's request message and a control message; and

circuitry operable for transmitting said bundled message comprising said client's request message and said control message to said network processor.

Claim 17 (original) The system as recited in claim 16, wherein said control message comprises information used to enable said network processor to create entries in a forwarding table to ensure packets from said client are transmitted to said server and to ensure packets from said server are transmitted to said client.

Claims 18-19 (cancelled)